
**HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD
STAFF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION**

Landmark/District:	Anacostia Historic District	(x) Consent
Address:	1620 U Street SE	(x) Concept
Meeting Date:	April 25, 2013	(x) New construction
Case Number:	13-282	
Staff Reviewer:	Tim Dennée	

The applicant, owner District Properties, requests the Board's review of a conceptual application to construct a two-story, frame house on a presently vacant lot. The lot stands in the middle of four narrow, vacant lots, so that it would not adjoin another, at least immediately. The house would extend side lot line to side lot line, 22 feet wide. As a consequence, the side elevations cannot have window openings.

The house would be sided with fiber-cement boards, and the portion of the roof visible from the ground would be standing seam metal. The design is historicist, derived from nearby historic homes. It has been revised to incorporate some staff suggestions.

The applicant also proposes a solid-steel, front fence at 42 inches high and a rear, plank fence at six feet tall. There would also be a concrete parking pad at rear, off the alley.

Evaluation

Because mansard roofs, even false ones, were so consistently clad with slate roofs historically, the visible roof material should be some kind of shingle. Slate, a faux slate or a metal shingle would be preferable and provide a more appropriate scale to the roof sheathing that would be more compatible with the historic district. Two squares of faux slate would compare favorably in cost to standing seam metal, given the additional labor cost of the latter, and the metal is more typical of a lower-pitched roof or a rural house.

The roof vents appear to be placed slightly too high on the mansard.

The rooftop HVAC unit should also be shifted to a spot more central on the roof, so as to minimize its visibility.

Other details should continue to be refined in consultation with HPO. For instance, the cornice brackets should be more robust and project more, and the parts of the cornice itself should be better integrated. Care should also be taken with the selection of the porch posts. The details of commonly available posts are more suited to larger-scale new construction and to code-complaint rail heights, rather than to historic rail heights or a situation like this, where no balustrade is proposed. The posts should resemble more the traditional turned posts, with a

lower base and a wider section of turning; many new posts have a base, however, of 42 or 44 inches. Also, a nominal five-inch-wide post is probably called for, rather than six.

The porch is designed without a balustrade because its slab is just above grade, so no rail is necessary. While most porches have them, there are plenty of historic examples without.

The porch roof could alternatively be a low hip, rather than flat. This would probably improve the proportion of the upper story. The trade-off, however, is that the roof material would become more of an issue, as it would be visible, and rather than having a drain and downspout back near the front wall, the porch would need a gutter all around and possibly a downspout along one of the posts.

Recommendation

The HPO recommends approval of the concept, with a delegation to staff of further review, including the details discussed above.